



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

# SAXON

President: The Earl of Cranbrook

No.39 / 2003

*Below: Bronze Age roundhouse at Flag Fen*

*Photo: Trish Mulholland*



*Above: Society members enjoying a guided tour*

*Photo: Alison Booth*

## SOCIETY VISIT TO FLAG FEN AND ELY CATHEDRAL

On 14 September 2003, a warm and cloudless day, sixty one members and friends visited Flag Fen Bronze Age Centre.

Three thousand years ago the Fens were a huge inland extension of that great shallow bay, the Wash. They were then a shallow marshy lake, especially in wet winters, which in summer would have been covered with grass, providing grazing for large numbers of cattle and sheep. Flag Fen was a small narrow-necked bay in this lake and around it the ground rose gently as flood-free pasture – an area known as Fengate, now a modern industrial estate on the outskirts of Peterborough.

Drainage of the Fens began in the Middle Ages on a very small scale. Most work was done in the early seventeenth century by Dutch engineers. Unfortunately further wholesale land drainage has now resulted in very few places remaining where one might find early remains preserved in waterlogged conditions.

In 1971 Francis Pryor began an eight year excavation of Fengate. Archaeological evidence shows that it was continuously occupied for 4000 years from Neolithic to Roman Times. Pryor found several Bronze

Age roundhouses and over fifty from the Iron Age. In 1982 whilst investigating a drainage ditch at nearby Flag Fen, archaeologists discovered waterlogged timbers, remains of the largest known Bronze Age religious site in Europe.

Work over the next four years, including the site of a proposed power station at Fengate, revealed about a kilometre (½ mile) line of posts across the 'mouth' of the Flag Fen inlet. In the lowest lying and wettest area the original builders of the post alignment also constructed a massive wooden platform of timber, occupying about a hectare (2.4 acres) using many thousands of logs.

This post alignment may have been a trackway and or a defensive barrier. The platform seems to have been used during the Bronze Age and thousands of objects, many deliberately broken, were thrown from it into the water as part of a religious ritual.

For some reason which is not fully understood, these objects were being removed from worldly use and bestowed upon the ancestors: personal ornaments, pottery, querns, and the largest collection of prehistoric metal work from any British Bronze Age excavation including the earliest wheel yet found in Britain (1200 – 1300BC).

During the guided tour of the site we had the chance to see the Mere, a shallow artificial lake constructed in 1987 to preserve part of the buried Bronze Age platform and post alignment in waterlogged conditions. We also visited the Preservation Hall, which has an excellent excavated section of the post alignment in a sunken viewing area. It is sprayed continuously with water to preserve the exposed timbers and is surrounded by a painted ancient landscape which helps the visitor 'place' himself in the fens as they might have appeared between 1100 and 1000BC.

We experienced what life might have been like in Bronze and Iron Age roundhouses, saw the Visitor Centre, Museum and part of the Fen Causeway – the only major Roman road constructed across the Fens, possibly to assist suppression of the Iceni (Boudica). We also saw the preservation tanks used for the conservation of ancient timbers from all over the country. We were unable to see the famous Norfolk 'Seahenge' which had been removed for further conservation work only a few days before our visit.



Left: This unique display area at Flag Fen is the only Bronze Age timbers as excavated in Europe. Most of the wood dates roughly to the period 1350—950BC, and has been left in its original position. These timbers are part of the post alignment that runs between Fengate and Northey Island. The entire width of the post alignment is excavated here, but the exhibit reveals only 10 metres of its kilometre stretch; that's only one percent of the total, showing the massive scope of the Bronze Age construction at Flag Fen.

Photo: Jenny Glazebrook

### And so to Ely

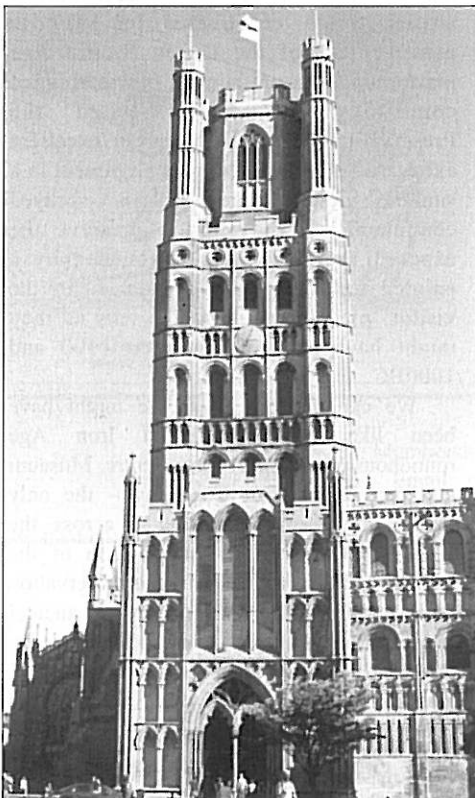
Etheldreda, one of the daughters of the Wuffing King Anna founded her monastery in 673AD on a site very close to the present cathedral. She died in 679, and her body was removed to a Saxon church in 695, then to the newly built Norman Church in 1106. In 1253 she was moved again to a fine shrine built to cope with the large numbers of medieval pilgrims.

Before the pre-arranged guided tour of the Cathedral, some members of our party attended Evensong — a wonderfully uplifting experience. Afterwards, two Cathedral guides, one a society member (Norman Sneesby) gave us fascinating tours of the building. We were shown the site of Etheldreda's shrine, which was destroyed at the Reformation, the carvings depicting her on a roof boss and on



Above: Gargoyles from Ely Cathedral

Photo: Alison Booth



the capitals of the octagon pillars, the paintings telling her life story round the interior of the lantern tower, her chapel and that of St Edmund. We were also shown the only remnant of the Saxon church, an eighth century cross, and the grave of Byrhtnoth who died in 991AD at the Battle of Maldon.

Some of us also visited the Victorian Roman Catholic Church where Etheldreda's left hand is displayed. It was discovered in 1810 in a priest's hiding-hole in a Sussex farmhouse, eventually finding its way to this church in 1953.

Stewart Salmond

#### Further reading:

*Seahenge* by Francis Pryor (2001)  
*Britain BC* by Francis Pryor (2003)  
*Etheldreda* by Norman Sneesby (1999)

Left: Ely Cathedral

Photo: Trish Mulholland

#### Footnote:

From the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Bishops of Ely had important roles in affairs of state and needed a household in London Shakespeare's *Richard II* had the dying John of Gaunt give his famous speech in Ely Palace, 'This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle...' Today all that remains of that vast medieval complex is the chapel dedicated to St Etheldreda in Ely Place, 140 metres from Holborn Circus. It is well worth seeking out this large and beautiful double-decker church.

Flag Fen is located on the eastern outskirts of Peterborough. Open daily from 10am, last admission 4pm, closed 5pm. Seasonal variations apply. Please telephone: 01733 313414 Fax: 01733 349957 before visiting or check details on website: [www.flagfen.com](http://www.flagfen.com)

# Guiding at Sutton Hoo 1984 - 2002

## by Andrew Lovejoy

### CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN?...

*Nowadays, there are a lot of new faces at Sutton Hoo who continually ask about the days pre-NT (Before National Trust). This may come as a bit of a revelation, but if you were involved with Sutton Hoo BNT, you have become history and I hate to tell you this, but if you remember Sutton Hoo before 1990, you are ancient history. So, for the 'newcomers' at Sutton Hoo who ask us 'oldies' 'can you remember when'?... The following article is just for you: (Chairman)*

The need for volunteer tour guides was on the society's agenda right from the start. As the burial site excavations got under way in 1984, more and more people wanted to visit Sutton Hoo. The potential problems of the public roaming around what was essentially a scientific site became cause for concern and a solution was obviously required. The Sutton Hoo Society immediately stepped in to solve the problem. A small group of local people willing to guide visitors around the excavations was galvanised into action, thereby raising money to support the work of the Sutton Hoo Research Project. A system was set up to offer guided tours at set times resulting in a steady stream of visitors eager to see the archaeologists at work.

The nature of the sandy soil at Sutton Hoo meant that the edges of trenches and features were fragile, many an unsuspecting visitor while attempting to get a closer view of the proceedings stood too close to an edge with disastrous results. A paragraph taken from the 1984 Society Committee Minutes reads:

*'It was felt that trenches should be protected next year with tapes restraining visitors'.*

### The early days

Those early days were perhaps the most exciting period of guiding at Sutton Hoo and there was clearly much to talk about. One item on the agenda was the setting up of a ferry service across the River Deben from Woodbridge to Sutton Hoo, (the ferry ran from 1985 for seven years until being discontinued due to operational problems). It was also necessary to find a quiet corner for the tour groups to congregate, resulting in a permanent home for the Guides 'ticket hut'.

Memories of those early years flood back: blazing sun, torrential rain, dust storms, hurricane, wailing babies, playful dogs, film crews, exhausted archaeologists and students, late night revelries and growing spoil heaps! Through all the hazards one factor emerged — the genuine and immense enthusiasm of the visitors who couldn't get enough of the Sutton Hoo Story.

The guides in those days were an eccentric lot with idiosyncratic tendencies! Each guide had his or her own version of the story and it became an unwritten law that, apart from training purposes, no guide should ever listen to another's tour — harmony was maintained! In the early days guides were in relatively short supply and some days it was hard work to keep going, a record was set in 1985 when John Warburton gave five successive one-hour tours. One measure of a successful tour was the number of souvenirs the public bought and I well remember in the very early days both guides and visitors took tea laid out on site by the ladies.

It wasn't just the job of guiding that was rewarding, our lives were marked by the character and setting of the landscape at Sutton Hoo. On weekend afternoons standing on a windswept plateau overlooking the River Deben one would step back into a world of 1400 years ago: the resinous scent of nearby Top Hat Wood, the song of the nightingales in Spring and that memorable sound of the ever-present skylark, all played their part to thrill the senses and conjure up atavistic notions. Such experiences were a marvellous reward for one's efforts.

### Highlights

On 9 July 1987 the President of the Sutton Hoo Society, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, paid a visit to Sutton Hoo which cast a memorable lustre over everyone. Several newspapers commented on the fact that a member of the Royal Family was again standing on a small piece of England which may not have witnessed such an honour for nearly 1400 years. The public came in their hundreds — it was invigorating stuff.

The BBC broadcast a series of 50 — minute programmes on Sutton Hoo. In the summer months it was quite the norm to see a low-flying helicopter encircling the site with a cameraman leaning out. Many of the volunteers spent hours cleaning the excavations for filming, only to see their efforts covered in sand by the helicopter rotor blades. They were not amused — some of the language on site would have made an Anglo-Saxon warrior blush!

There have been other highlights over the years and many private memories which belong to each guide. But there is another unique side to guiding at Sutton Hoo: not only does it have a parochial ambience of its own,

it also stirs the imagination to realize that one's humble efforts represent a commentary on something that has international importance. That, in part, sums up the charm of guiding, especially so in the early days: it was a local affair with national dimensions which passed off in a totally unceremonious way.

### Today's challenge

Between 1984 and March 2002 would-be visitors to the Sutton Hoo burial site had to make a twenty minute walk from the main Woodbridge to Sutton road (opposite the Hollesley junction) along a rough sandy track exposed to the elements. They were a captive audience who had but one goal — to hear the Sutton Hoo Story.

Guides today have a different challenge. Of course many visitors come to Sutton Hoo for the same reason as they have in the past, but there are many more who are in essence visiting another National Trust property. The challenge for today's guide is to encourage the visitor to go beyond the Exhibition and the comfort of the Visitor Centre and Restaurant, to experience the thrill of the Sutton Hoo Story, set in the landscape where it all took place.

One thing is clear, the guides of those early years provided the foundation for those of today who are without doubt performing their own miracles in telling the Sutton Hoo Story to a much rapidly expanding audience. May they have every success.



*Above: Summer 2003 — Visitors on Mound 1 enjoying their burial ground tour with guide Alan Cogdell (back to camera).*

*Photo: Veronica Bennett*

*Andrew Lovejoy is an ardent enthusiast of Sutton Hoo and has worked tirelessly as a Society committee member for many years. He was Membership Secretary from 1990 to 1999, Guiding Secretary from 1992 to 1997 and has been a Tour Guide since 1984. He retired from Guiding in 2002.*

## Sutton Hoo Society Interview: Dr Rosemary Hoppitt

**Dr Rosemary Hoppitt, founder member of the Society and Chairman from 1994 to 2002, gave a recent interview for *Saxon*.**

**Q: Can you remember when you first became interested in Sutton Hoo?**

**A:** Very clearly - I was seven years of age. My parents gave me a children's book called *'Puzzles of the Past - The wonderful world of Archaeology'* written by Ronald Jessup (published in 1956). As well as articles about Pompeii, Stonehenge and other archaeological sites, there was an account of the 1939 excavation at Sutton Hoo. (I still have the book).

**Q: And after that?**

**A:** I suppose that book started what was to become a lifelong interest in archaeology but it wasn't until I was in my late teens that I began to be interested in archaeology as a 'real' subject.

**Q: You then went on to Birmingham University to read Geography and Archaeology?**

**A:** Yes — against the advice of my headmaster who maintained that one shouldn't study one's hobby at University! It was there that I was first introduced to a wonderful subject called Historical Geography which was to have a major impact on my life.

**Q: Was there anyone in particular who influenced you?**

**A:** Oh yes! — there were three really inspirational individuals at University; Christopher Dyer, Harry Thorpe and Philip Rahtz; these three people brought together the disciplines of history, geography, and archaeology in the seamless context of the medieval landscape; and also Peter Gelling who in his lectures on Anglo-Saxon and Viking archaeology introduced me to the fantastic world of Anglo-Saxon and Viking art.

**Q: I understand you met someone else at University who was to have a major influence?**

**A:** Yes — my husband Cliff! He was reading Electronic Engineering.

**Q: What did you do after leaving University?**

**A:** I began my teaching career in Hertfordshire and we moved to Suffolk in 1975 — you can imagine my delight at settling in Woodbridge, on the doorstep of Sutton Hoo! I was able to continue to follow my two parallel lines of interest — the one through teaching geography, and the other through involvement with the Moated Sites Research Group, newly formed in the 1970s. This involved recording medieval moated sites in Hertfordshire to add to the Group's database, and doing the same on moving to Suffolk.

**Q: How did you become involved with Sutton Hoo?**

**A:** I was a member of Woodbridge Museum committee and in the summer of 1982 we began planning the Sutton Hoo Display which would form a centre-piece for the Museum. Fortunately this coincided with the appointment of Martin Carver as Director Designate of the Sutton Hoo Research Project. In March 1983 Dr Bruce-Mitford officially opened the Museum exhibition and Martin Carver gave an address; the Executive Committee of the Research Trust also attended. In the Project's early stages, the Museum provided official facilities for the on-site staff. The first work done on the site was surveying and fieldwalking and basically the staff were just camping up there.

**Q: So how did the Sutton Hoo Society come about?**

**A:** It became clear that for the Project to succeed it needed support on the ground locally. Because the Project was based (then) at Birmingham University, there needed to be a way into the local community to enable that support to be identified. A meeting took place at the Seckford Hall Hotel on Sunday 3 June 1984 (the Project by then was just over a year old) to which a variety of people and interested parties were invited. I went to represent the Woodbridge Museum. On that afternoon the basics were hammered out — such mundane things as subscriptions, need for charitable status, constitution plans and the like, but in addition the discussion ranged across a number of topics — many of which anticipated the problems and issues that the Society, the Research Project and the National Trust were to come face to face with much later on.

**Q: Who featured on the Committee in the early days?**

**A:** The first A G M was held at Woodbridge School on 1 November 1985 with Mac Miles as Chairman and Mike Weaver Hon. Secretary; John Aldridge Hon. Treasurer; Martin Carver Project Director; Peter Berry site manager; John Warburton publicity; Robert Simper ferry manager (Robert was elected Chairman in 1989); Liz Miles membership secretary; Bob Beardsley and myself. At the A G M in 1987 we were



Above: Dr Rosemary Hoppitt

Photo: Cliff Hoppitt

able to announce that HRH The Duke of Edinburgh had generously agreed to be the Society's President.

**Q: What were your hopes and aspirations for the Society when you became Chairman in 1994?**

**A:** The 1980's excavations were coming to an end and the Society was, in a sense, in limbo; we needed to find a new focus or possibly face oblivion. Would we be able to continue guiding visitors around the burial site? (public access to the site was a perennial problem). More to the point, without the excavations, would the public still *want* to visit the site? It was the firm view of some that the Society might as well fold. The answers are now history. Arrangements were made to keep the site open and the fact that people continued to ask for guided tours meant that the Society still had a role to play — we kept the pot bubbling, continued to maintain the site and exhibition huts and offer guided tours. In addition we continued to produce *SAXON*, whose content now had to change as we no longer had site reports. We began to use it to report on the increasing number of Society activities — lectures and excursions and events — and updates on the progress towards publication. In all we continued to maintain the profile of Sutton Hoo as an important place.

**Q: And then?**

A: In 1993 everything was thrown into question again at the sad death of Mrs Annie Tranmer. Decisions about the future ownership of the Sutton Hoo Estate had to be made and it was clear the process was going to be a lengthy one, meanwhile the Society continued to develop and expand its promotion of Sutton Hoo, seeing rises in membership and visitors, and extending academic activities to running a biennial conference with national and international appeal. In 1998 the National Trust officially became the new owners.

**Q: Do you think your original hopes and aspirations for the Society were realised?**

A: In that the Society continued to grow and develop its role of disseminating

information and raising the Sutton Hoo profile – yes. The unknown was how we fitted into the picture once the National Trust became owners of the site. However, during the transitional period between 1993 and 2000 we were able to build our relationship with the National Trust, feeling our way how we slotted into each others' picture, and working closely together on the plans for the Visitor Centre and Exhibition. In 2002 we made a formal agreement with the National Trust to continue our role in providing and training burial site guides, this was an important moment for the Society and one of which I am particularly proud.

**Q: On a personal note, do you have other interests and activities?**

A: Sutton Hoo has, in the last 5 years occupied a large proportion of my free time.

Nevertheless, I do manage a bit of light relief – mainly dancing – Modern Jive, Salsa and Argentinean Tango.

**Q: Finally, do you have any plans to fill those many hours you used to spend working as chairman of the Society?**

A: Yes. I plan to spend more time in Historical Geography research. I have unfinished business with regard to my research into Suffolk's deer parks, rabbit warrens and dovecotes!

*We apologise to Cliff Hoppitt for the poor quality with which some of his pictures were reproduced in Saxon 38, The Sutton Hoo Society Conference; this was due to technical problems. We hope we've done better with his photo of Rosemary, left.*

## Guides Outing to West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village

One of the most frequently asked questions Sutton Hoo Society Guides come across is 'where did the ordinary people live during the sixth and seventh centuries?' Furthermore, in comparison to the ruling elite at Sutton Hoo (shown by the opulence of the display in the National Trust Exhibition and Treasury), what might the life styles of ordinary folk have been like?

On a warm summer evening in August a group of Sutton Hoo Society guides visited West Stow near Bury St Edmunds to find out.

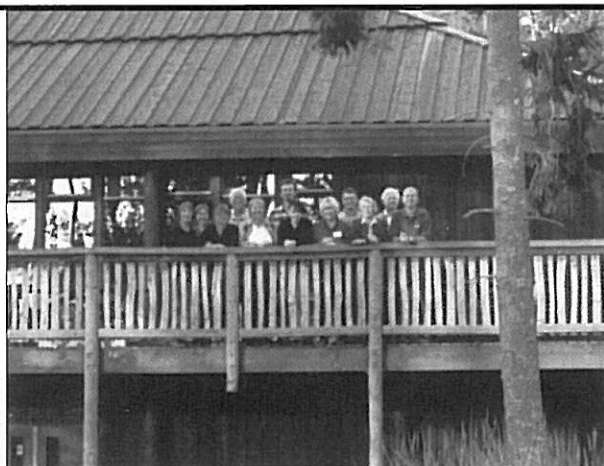
The twenty two of us who made the trip were treated, and that really is the right word for it, to a detailed and informative guided tour by site curator, Alan Baxter. He certainly had the knack of bringing back to life the long departed occupants of the various reconstructed buildings, houses, weaving sheds, workshops, animal pens and a presently under-construction hall complex, which are all grouped together near the top of rising ground a short distance from the River

Lark. It was possible to imagine the hard, but by no means miserable, circumstances in which the residents lived.

However, if you are not a particularly imaginative soul, do not despair. One of the principal features of the site is that it is a 'living' museum. The carefully thought out and crafted reconstructions, rebuilt in most cases on the very locations where they were excavated, take into account the evidence discovered. But that is not all. The validity or otherwise of the 'finished product' is bravely put to the test by volunteers who occasionally dress themselves in Anglo-Saxon costume and live, eat and sleep in the buildings. What better way is there (especially if someone else is doing the testing) to find out if the structure is wind and rainproof, or that the smoke rising from the hearth actually does exit through the roof, rather than falling back to ground level to choke the occupants!

As well as the hands-on experiences available, West Stow has succeeded in creating a quite remarkable low cost (according to Alan) but high value museum underneath the café and shop complex. It contains finds from the settlement site and adjacent cemetery which are displayed together. There are also finds from local cemeteries of the same period that have been excavated to provide more information about burial practices.

The centre piece of the display area is the 'fashion show' where the female haute-couture of the day is modelled in an attempt to reconstruct what the clothing may have looked like. The display is colourful and brings the whole place to life. Interestingly, the mannequins bear an uncanny resemblance to the representation of Raedwald lying in the burial ship reconstruction at Sutton Hoo!



*Above: Guides outside West Stow Visitor Centre.*

For those of us fortunate enough to be there that evening, came the opportunity to widen our knowledge and understanding of how and where the ordinary people lived during the sixth and seventh centuries. The visit also underpinned the close connections, although at a very different strata of society, between Sutton Hoo and West Stow. I for one will now feel very much better informed when I am asked... 'but where did the ordinary people live?' I now know not only where and to some extent how they passed their time, but I could also, if I were not so firmly wedded to the comforts of the twenty first century, volunteer to try it out at first hand.

We owe Alan and his staff a big vote of thanks for the experience. Their enthusiasm and commitment was inspirational – as were the cups of tea! I thoroughly recommend a visit (or revisit) to all.

**Mike Argent**



*Left: View of West Stow Anglo Saxon village. Photos: Trish Mulholland*

# The Covehithe Log Boat: Retrieved for Posterity

by Julia Park

In 1998 a local fisherman, Rodney Collett, was trawling off the coast at Covehithe. Caught in his net was a large wooden structure which he brought to shore. The structure proved to be a log boat that the finder planned to cut up for firewood. A local maritime archaeologist, Stuart Bacon of Suffolk Underwater Studies, was informed of the find. Stuart and boat specialist Valerie Fenwick saw immediately that the log boat was of historic significance, they took samples of the wood and placed the boat in an inland lagoon at Dunwich courtesy of the Suffolk Coast and Heath Project and the RSPB.

The log boat was radiocarbon dated to 775 — 892AD by the National Environmental Research Council, Glasgow. The Sutton Hoo boat has, by comparison been dated to 624 — 5 AD. The log boat is 5m long and 700mm at its widest remaining width. It has been gouged out of the trunk of an oak tree and is of twisted wood construction. Remaining tool marks indicate the method of production.

This log boat is part of Suffolk's heritage. It is assumed that it is a boat, but other uses cannot be ruled out as log boats were used at this time as coffins. At Snape, for example, boat stains dating to the sixth or early seventh centuries have been recorded (Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001).

The Covehithe log boat is not only of local significance but builds on information relating to boat construction in different parts of the country, such as the Clapton boat, dated to 950 — 1000AD (Ed. Marsden 1989).

It is assumed that the log boat was originally left abandoned in an inland lagoon. However, due to the retreat of the coast line around Covehithe, the boat was, by the twentieth century, lodged on a ledge under the sea. Its existence gives a unique insight into the life and livelihood of the people exploiting the wet land of the coastal margins in the mid to late Saxon period.

In November 2002 it was moved to a tank at the Marine Finds Conservation Centre at Bentwaters Parks where Deep Sea Exploration plc are hosting its conservation. To fund the work, Suffolk Underwater Studies are seeking a Local Heritage Initiative grant from the Lottery Fund. We are also seeking sponsors and will be encouraging local people to get involved with the boat and a wider survey of its environs.

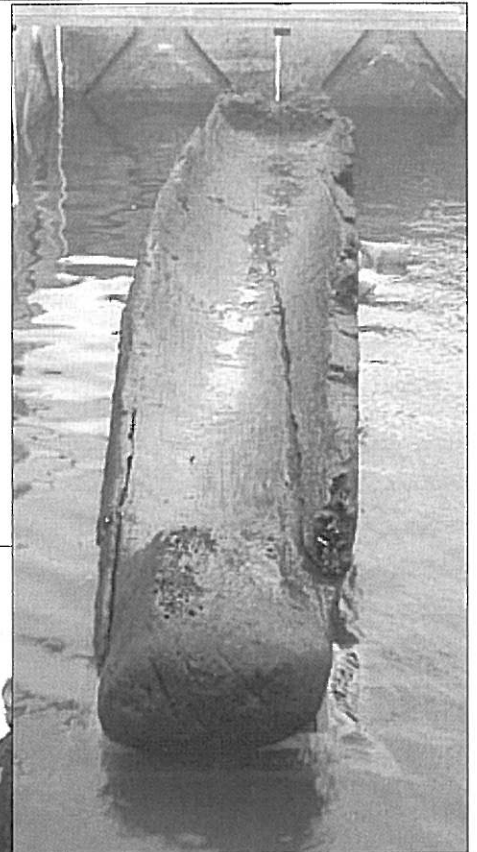
If sufficient funding is obtained the log boat will be assessed by a wood technologist, it will be drawn and dated by dendrochronology. After a conservation assessment a programme of treatment will be finalised and it is expected that we will impregnate to 95% with Polyethylene Glycol and dry under controlled conditions.

The project will look at the technology of the boat, its use, the local environment at that

time and subsequent coastal changes. We hope to build a picture of life in late Saxon times in this area from the study. This will include map and original source research as well as geographical and environmental survey with possible core sampling and offshore work. As part of this study we want to attract the public through open days, talks and experimental archaeology. A schools package is also being planned.

Suffolk Underwater Studies is a group of volunteers including divers who have taken on an intensive study of the Suffolk coastline over the past 18 years. They record and monitor changes ranging over all disciplines, looking at erosion, deposition, pollution,

*Below: The log boat after lifting in 1998.*



*Above: In the conservation tank at the Marine Conservation Centre.*

*Log boat photos: Deep Sea Exploration plc.*



WW2 debris, ancient wrecks and wreckage, bird life and marine life washed up on the shore. They have a permanent exhibition at Orford in Suffolk which is open to the public.

If you are interested in getting involved, or would like to view the boat, please do not hesitate to contact Jeremy Upton, tel: 01394 461527.

The Covehithe log boat is part of the history of the ordinary people of Suffolk and deserves to be retained for the enjoyment and study of future generations.

(W. Filmer-Sankey and T. Pestell 2001 *Snape Anglo-Saxon Cemetery: Excavations and Surveys 1824—1992 East Anglian Archaeology 95*)

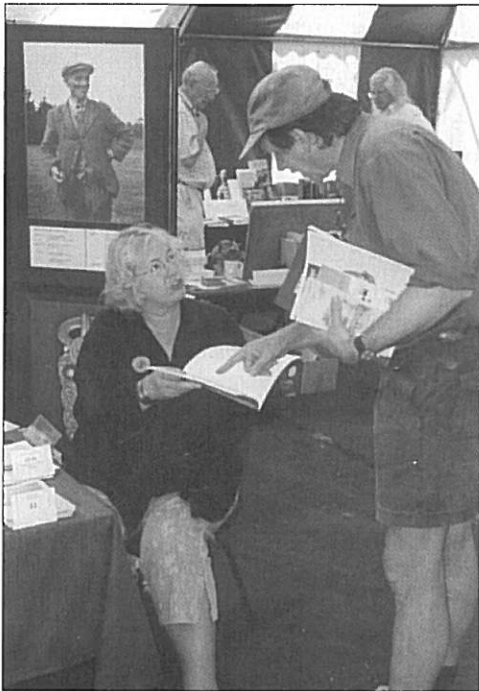
(P. Marsden (Ed.) 1989 'A Late Anglo-Saxon Boat from Clapton, Borough of Hackney' *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration* 18(2) 89—111)

*Julia Park trained in Restoration and Museum Studies at Lincoln College of Art and in Archaeological Conservation at UCL. She worked for some years as Conservator for Ipswich Museums and as Collections Conservator at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, English Heritage. She now works freelance.*

## Sutton Hoo Society at the Suffolk History Festival

The Suffolk History Festival and Cherry Fair 2003 was a combined event held in the grounds of the Museum of East Anglian Life on 12 and 13 July. There were lively events in the Grand Ring, with Roman soldiers, Suffolk punches, sheepdogs and folk dancers in action. Traditional groups performed informal music in the Music Marquee, while there were films and talks about Suffolk in the past — barges, brewing, fishing and the seaside. On their own sites, the Colchester Roman Society demonstrated something of the life of the First Cohort of Vardulli, and the men of the Territorial Battalions of the Suffolk Regiment attended a 1913 training

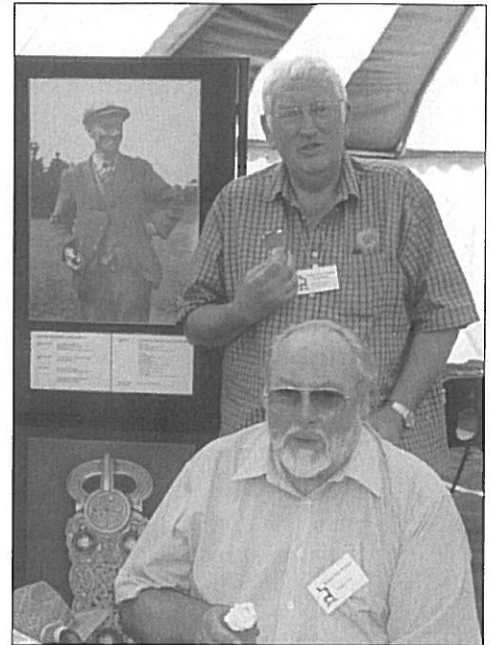
*Below: Chairman Lindsay Lee in conversation with a long standing friend and supporter of the Society — Ivan Cuttings*



camp wearing the uniforms and eating the food of the time. The 'first English' were well represented by a group from the West Stow Anglo-Saxon village, showing something of the dress and customs of the period.

The Sutton Hoo Society was one of a number of historical and archaeological groups who manned stalls in the exhibition tents. Our stall was set up using our newly purchased display panels, and Alison Booth provided a well designed and eye-catching spread, showing something of what was special about Sutton Hoo. Copies of our publications were on sale, and we supplied story tellers to introduce visitors — adults and children — to the historical and human story of Sutton Hoo.

In truth, however, our conclusions about the event itself and of our part in it can only be described as very mixed. No one has any doubt that the Society, given the importance of Sutton Hoo and our contribution to the archaeology of Suffolk, should have been represented, and our stand was very impressive. It was also a very pleasant opportunity to meet old friends and new acquaintances who share similar interests. However, we sold very few publications, and our storytellers — who had prepared very thoroughly — were little noticed and had very small audiences, if any. A main reason for this lack of success was the very extended nature of the Museum site, with considerable distances between activities. The provision of unreliable, inconsistent and infrequent transport failed to mitigate this disadvantage. Things were made worse for the Society and others like it by being tucked away a few hundred yards from the Grand Ring with no public address system, and for the story tellers by being hidden even further away behind the Exhibition marquees.



*Three Sutton Hoo heroes! Basil Brown (with pipe), Mike Argent and Robert Allen (with ice creams)*

*Photos: Mike Argent*

We can, nevertheless, feel very positive about the quality of our display, and about the contributions of our members — who ensured that our stall was set up expertly, and manned by at least three at all times — and by the excellence of our story-tellers (drawn from our guides), even if their offerings were denied to many.

**Robert Allen**

## OBITUARY

### Squadron Leader Robert (Bob) Beardsley

Squadron Leader Robert (Bob) Beardsley died peacefully in his sleep at Ipswich Hospital on 17 October 2003.



He had an active flying career in the RAF and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by King George VI. He appears in a number of books on the Battle of Britain, chasing or being chased across the Channel by the foe, but always recounted his adventures with modesty and a sense of humour. For a time he commanded the RAF base at Bawdsey. Upon his retirement from the RAF he trained as a teacher and taught history at Butley Middle School with some distinction.

He became involved with the Sutton Hoo Society in the very early years and was Hon. Secretary between 1985 and 1988. He was an essential part of those exciting early days when, after the first TV programmes, thousands of visitors appeared over the

horizon, each one reporting to what he called 'the visitors reception area' — a modified garden shed!

Bob took on the task of recruiting and training tour guides until 1993 and was always ready with his slides to give talks to interest-groups. Cleverly, Bob had trained Larry Gatter as a guide and it was Larry who took up the reins of Hon. Secretary when Bob stood down. He will be remembered with affection as a warm and kind person who was always ready to share a joke. His enthusiasm for everything Sutton Hoo and the encouragement he imparted to others will not be forgotten. Our sympathies go to Eileen, his wife, and to his family.



### Sutton Hoo Society AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 6 February 2004 7.30pm at Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo.

#### Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes of the last AGM
- Reports and Accounts
- Proposal for changes to the Constitution

After the formal meeting Angus Wainwright will give a talk.

#### Spring Lecture

Wednesday 10 March 2004 at 7.30pm at Tranmer House. Noel Adams (British Museum) will present 'Between Myth and Reality: Reading the Sutton Hoo Purse Lid'. Tickets on the door, members free, non-members £2

### Forthcoming Events

#### SUTTON HOO SOCIETY 20th ANNIVERSARY

To celebrate the event an  
**Anglo-Saxon Festival**

To be held at Sutton Hoo on  
**Sunday 4 July 2004**

A one day event organised by the Sutton Hoo Society together with West Stow. The full programme is yet to be finalised but it will be a day to remember. Members free. *Details later but book the date in your diary now!*

#### SUTTON HOO SOCIETY CONFERENCE 16 October 2004

### Anglo-Saxon Landscapes Real and Imaginary

To be held at the Royal Hospital School  
Holbrook near Ipswich

Speakers will address various issues relating to Anglo-Saxon Landscape Studies with special reference to East Anglia and Sutton Hoo

### Programme and booking form in the next issue of Saxon

### Hands on History Video

Conserving the Dark Age Legacy of Sutton Hoo (narrated by Sir David Attenborough)

In the summer of 2000, Suffolk Archaeologists discovered an Early Anglo-Saxon mixed rite cemetery, barely 500 metres north of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial and barrow cemetery. The discovery was made by Suffolk archaeologists who were excavating in advance of building works on the new National Trust visitor centre. A total of 36 graves were discovered, 19 of which were inhumations and 17 cremations.

The Hands on History video follows the objects from site to the British Museum's Conservation Department and looks in detail at the investigation and conservation of the objects by the conservation team to reveal exciting and important discoveries.

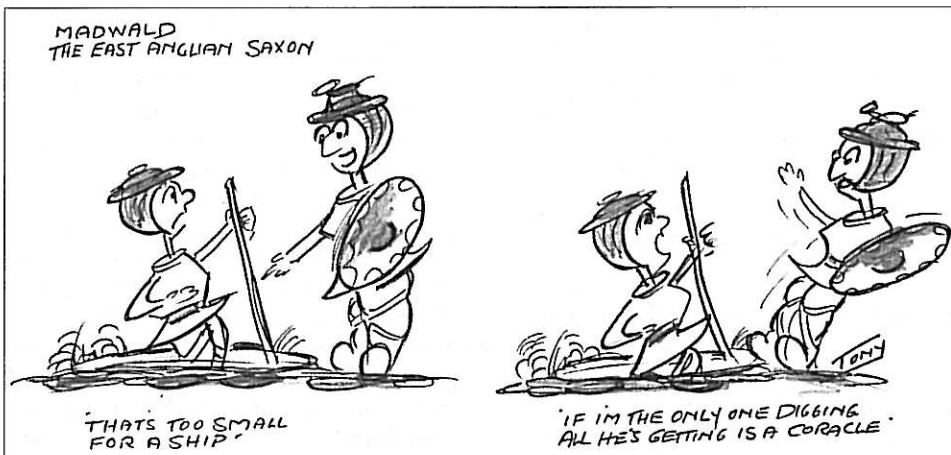
The video looks closely at two groups of objects from this cemetery site. The first is a Celtic style copper alloy hanging bowl which had been re-used as a cremation urn. The bowl was excavated in a soil block by archaeologists and taken to the conservation laboratories where it was carefully investigated. The bowl would originally have been suspended from its three enamelled escutcheons but was re-used as a cremation vessel which contained both human and animal bone.

The second group of objects is from the grave of a male warrior who was buried with his shield, sword and spear. Conservation work focuses on his wooden, leather covered shield which is decorated with fine, stylised animal designs and circular decorative studs made from gold and silver.

The video shows conservators working alongside curators and scientists to analyse, investigate and extract information from these objects to enable us to more fully understand Anglo-Saxon culture.

#### Exclusive offer to Society Members Recommended retail price £12.99

Members discount price £9.50 (p&p inc)  
If interested, please send name and address, (stating how many copies) to: Robert Allen, White Gables, Thornley Drive, Rushmere St Andrew, Ipswich IP4 3LR  
Please make cheque payable to The Sutton Hoo Society (no credit card payments).



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### Who's Who — Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

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